"GELT is Useful, though I Believe We Have to Stick to Traditional ELT": Conflicting Ideologies from a Private Language School Context

Nattapat Suejam[1], Desiree Kawabata[2*]

***Corresponding author's email: d.kawabata@griffith.edu.au**

[1]Research Unit in Linguistics, Literature, and Language Education for Sustainability (LLLES), School of Liberal Arts, Mae Fah Luang University, Thailand

[2]Griffith University, Australia

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Abstract

An emerging paradigm in ELT, Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT) challenges the so-called 'native-speakerism' ideology in language classrooms, offering an alternative framework for innovative and effective curriculum, material, and assessment design (Rose & Galloway, 2019). GELT has gained traction as a valuable field of applied linguistics research, especially in Thailand (Montakantiwong, 2023; Rajprasit, 2023). However, studies in the context of private English language schools remain underexplored despite their significant contribution to the ELT sector. This study investigates the opportunities and challenges of implementing GELT in a private English school in Thailand. An intensive workshop on GELT principles was delivered to various school staff. After the workshop, participants reflected on their conceptualisation of GELT and its suitability for adoption into the school's curriculum. Twenty-seven reflections were then examined for emerging themes regarding GELT opportunities and challenges. The results indicated that although stakeholders within the school context have accepting and positive attitudes towards GELT, questions and concerns persist. The findings show that GELT is a valuable framework that promotes authentic English use in a global context, boosts teachers' and students' confidence in English, and provides pedagogical advantages. However, language assessment and the priority of 'standard' language accuracy remain hindrances to its implementation.

Keywords: Global Englishes; GELT; Private language school; English as a lingua Franca; English as an international language

Introduction

Globalisation, "the process of world shrinkage, of distances getting shorter, things moving closer" (Larsson, 2001, p. 9), facilitates mutually beneficial communication and exchange among individuals worldwide. English, then, serves as a tool aiding such interactions between speakers of different first languages (MacKenzie, 2014; Seidlhofer, 2005), constituting most English users in the world (Crystal, 2014; Jenkins, 2014). Consequently, it has been stated that "English belongs to everybody who speaks it, but it is nobody's mother tongue" (Rajagopalan, 2004, p. 111). This changing view towards shared English ownership under the influence of globalisation undeniably has implications for English Language Teaching (ELT) (Kirkpatrick, 2012).

Most English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners communicate with people from diverse linguacultural backgrounds, for whom English is not their first language (Illés & Akcan, 2016). Eberhard et al., (2023) estimated that globally, only around 4% of interactions in English are between native-English speakers (as cited in da Costa & Rose, 2024). However, ELT remains disconnected from the diverse nature of English language learners worldwide, and centres on Anglophone monolingual native speaker (NS) norms in its pedagogies (Baker et al., 2024; Rose et al., 2021). This, in turn, can complicate the reality between English outside and in the classroom. Hence, ELT professionals should be cognisant of these sociolinguistic realities and of the need to deviate from the standardised NS norms to adequately prepare language learners to use English as a lingua franca (Rose & Galloway, 2019). As Galloway & Rose (2015) assert, "teaching learners that English conforms to a singular standard will ill-prepare them to use the language" (p. 203). Upholding 'native-speakerism' as a benchmark for language proficiency and competency seems neither valid nor appropriate in reflecting English's dynamic and authentic multifaceted use and status in the real world.

Recent research challenges the relevance and dominance of traditional pedagogies that prioritise a monolithic view of English in language teaching (see Chang, 2014; Galloway & Rose, 2014, 2017; Lee & Lee, 2018; Lee et al., 2018; Lu & Buripakdi, 2020; Selvi, et.al., 2024). However, its expansion (e.g. Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, the context of this study) remains under-researched (Rose et al., 2021). Moreover, expansion endeavours are mostly confined to formal educational contexts such as secondary schools (Passakornkarn & Vibulphol, 2020; Sangpetch et al., 2023) or universities (Montakantiwong, 2023; Rajprasit, 2023). Thus, the lack of research in the context of a private language school maintains the theory-practice divide pervasive in ELT. This shift in relation to private English language schools in Thailand has been largely overlooked by scholars, despite their significant contributions to the country's education and economy. Although exact numbers of such institutions are unknown, the culture of private language schooling has long dominated the educational sphere throughout Asian regions, especially Thailand (Chan & Mongkolhutthi, 2016; Charoenroop, 2021); in 2013, over 2,343 private language schools in Thailand catered to 535,639 students (Thai Publica, 2015).

One reason for such a phenomenon is the examination-oriented culture of Thai education that

forces students to seek support from private institutions to complement compulsory school education (Saengboon, 2019). Nationally, the results from the Ordinary National Educational Test (ONET), which assesses the outcomes of school learning, have shown that English remained the weakest subject for students from 2015 to 2019, and grade 12 students averaged only 27.76 percent in English (Admission Premium, as cited in Sritrakarn, 2021). Similarly, the global Education First (EF) corporation ranked Thailand in the "very low" category in the English Proficiency Index (EPI), the third lowest-ranked country in Asia (EF Proficiency Index, 2024). With this poor execution in language testing, English has become the subject most studied in private institutions (Charoenroop, 2021).

Consequently, private language schools play an important role in education in Thailand, by supporting students to thrive in language education aligned with the country's exam-focused culture. This exam-oriented culture, thus, often reinforces the traditional ELT paradigm that prioritises native-speaker norms and grammatical accuracy over communicative competence. Nevertheless, these institutions could greatly benefit from more curricular flexibility within their operational management, without the bureaucratic constraints that formal schools face. These differences then allow the private language school context more flexible opportunities for the potential for bottom-up pedagogical innovation. Studying this context, therefore, provides valuable insights into how a new ELT paradigm (such as GELT, discussed in the literature review section) may be pragmatically negotiated or adapted in such an influential yet constrained (exam-driven) educational culture. Investigating such a context of private language schools can help bridge the theory-practice divide and offer contextual strategies that provide inclusive and realistic English learning practices in Thailand and similar EFL contexts.

Research Objectives

Taking into account the predominant NS norms present in the lucrative private language school sector in Thailand, this paper investigates the opportunities and challenges of the paradigm shift in language teaching that advocates the transition from traditional ELT pedagogies. The study explores how stakeholders in these under-researched regional contexts (Thailand, specifically) and types of institutions (private language schools), perceive and respond to these changes, hopefully encouraging the adoption of more effective teaching methodologies.

Literature Review

Global Englishes (for) language teaching

Responding to changes in ELT, the inclusive Global Englishes paradigm has emerged as a way of repositioning English in the real world. Related ideologies include World Englishes [WE], which focuses on the various forms of English used in diverse global sociolinguistic contexts (see Kirkpatrick, 2007; Melchers et al., 2019); English as a Lingua Franca [ELF], which explores English as a contact language between speakers with different first languages (Jenkins, 2009; Mauranen, 2017); and English as an International Language [EIL], which concerns the "spread of English around the globe" (Sharifian,

2009, p. 2), with a focus on communicative outcomes (McKay, 2002). The GE paradigm (including these interrelated ideologies) explores the spread of English, accounting for "linguistic, sociolinguistic and sociocultural diversity, and fluidity of English use…in a globalised world" (Galloway & Rose, 2015; Pennycook, 2007; Rose & Galloway, 2019, p. 4).

This paradigm challenges the standard NS ideology in traditional ELT classrooms, leading to the Global English Language Teaching (hereafter GELT) framework as its pedagogical outcome (see Table 1 below), offering practical guidelines for innovative and effective curriculum, material, and assessment design (Rose & Galloway, 2019, p. 15). It reconceptualises critical elements in ELT, such as target interlocutors, ownership, role models, and sources of materials.

Table 1.

Conceptualisations: Traditional ELT and GELT

Dimensions	Traditional ELT	GELT
D1: Target interlocutors	Native English speakers	All English users
D2: Ownership	Inner circle	Global
D3: Target culture	Static native English cultures	Fluid cultures
D4: Norms	Standard English	Diverse, flexible, multiple forms
D5: Teachers	Non-NE-speaking teachers (same L1) and NE-speaking teachers	Qualified, competent teachers (same and different L1s)
D6: Role Model	Native English speakers	Expert users
D7: Source of materials	Native English speakers	Salient English-speaking communities/contexts
D8: Other languages and cultures	Considered a hindrance and source of interference	Considered a resource along with other languages
D9: Needs	Inner circle defined	Globally defined
D10: Assessment criterion	Accuracy according to prescriptive standards	Communicative competence
D11: Goals of learning	Native-like proficiency	Multicompetent user
D12: Ideology	Exclusive and ethnocentric view of English	Inclusive Global Englishes perspective
D13: Orientation	Monolingual	Multilingual/translingual

Interest in GELT stems from its challenging dominant ELT pedagogies, yet barriers to its successful transition and practical implementation persist, including strict adherence to 'standard' English, teacher education, and the nature of teaching materials (Galloway & Rose, 2015; Rose & Galloway, 2019; Suejam & Walkinshaw, 2025). First, strictly upholding 'standard' English is troublesome. Many learners from Asian countries maintain the notion that learning English from native-

English-speaking teachers (NESTs) is regarded as superior and more effective, and consider NESTs better role models than NNESTs (Apairach & Vibulphol, 2015; Lertlit & Wallin, 2023; Sahrai & Tantiniranat, 2024). Another hurdle for GELT's implementation is teacher education. Pre-service programs play a vital role in shaping future teachers' views on GELT, but often neglect the sociolinguistic realities of ELT (Dewey, 2015, p. 21). Intachai et al., (2025) also noted that teachers who are likely to implement GELT in their classrooms are those who had first-hand experience encountering interlocutors from various linguistic backgrounds and were adequately prepared in their formal teacher training education. People with such backgrounds are lacking in current teacher training programs in Thailand, so these conceptual transitions can be hard and slow, and teachers can be at loss navigating the idea on their own.

More importantly, teaching and learning materials still predominantly cater to NS norms in their representations. For example, Panyang and Phusawisot (2023) analysed grade 7 textbooks in Thailand and found that most reflected NS norms in conversations, dialogues, and images. Without an accurate representation of today's language users and cultures in learning materials, students' views and attitudes towards how English is actually used (and with whom) outside the classrooms are thereby restricted. In line with studies by Nishizaki (2025), and Suejam and Walkinshaw (2025), although there is acknowledgement of diversity of English in schools' curricula and in teachers' perceptions, little trace of such global representations was evidenced in teaching materials or textbooks; instead, static so-called standard NS norms dominated.

On a positive note, research interest in attempting to bring GELT into real language classrooms is gaining momentum (Galloway & Numajiri, 2020; Galloway & Rose, 2018). For example, Tardy et al. (2021) incorporated GELT into teaching academic writing to EAL students and Miao et al. (2025) utilised GELT-based intervention to improve students' listening comprehension and pronunciation. Findings show students' positive attitudes, results, and effects on recognising linguistic diversity. Unfortunately, these studies are solely confined to formal educational contexts (high schools and universities) and are small-scale studies conducted within short timeframes, making it difficult to evaluate their sustainable impact.

Research on private language schools, on the contrary, has received scant attention in the literature; to our knowledge, no studies have specifically explored this context in Thailand. Relevant studies have been conducted in other countries, such as Suejam et al. (2025), which investigated an Australian private English language school. This study explored the impact of students' attitudes toward multilingualism when introduced through newly designed lessons inspired by the GELT framework, and it reported similar findings. The main barriers identified were students' attachment to a monolingual ideology of English learning and their misconceptions about the global status of the English language. Thus, although students understood the purpose and enjoyed the lessons, they still exhibited some resistance towards the concept.

Consequently, these barriers are fundamental to the transition from traditional ELT to GELT, especially for private language schools that rely on enrolees' fees. Unarguably, there are expectations

from parents and students which reinforce the aforementioned barriers. The need to satisfy these stakeholders make private language schools different from formal educational institutions. Expanding the GELT study to private language schools can reveal stakeholders' views on its adoption and implementation, helping find common ground for all parties involved in language learning. This collaborative approach of engaging stakeholders can be "empowering" (Conde, et al., 2005, p.51). Investigating internal stakeholders' perspectives (teachers, materials designers, staff, and principals), then, is a crucial first step in effectively implementing changes while balancing the needs of all parties.

Research questions

The following two research questions were formulated to guide the study of one private language school in Thailand (henceforth, The School):

1. What are the overall attitudes of The School's teachers, materials designers, administrative staff, and principals towards the conceptualisation of GELT in a private language school context?
2. What are the possible opportunities and challenges perceived by The School's teachers, material designers, administrative staff, and principals regarding the implementation of GELT into The School's curriculum?

Method

This study adopts an exploratory case study approach to investigate a specific private language school in depth. Exploratory case studies are particularly suited for examining under-researched or emerging contexts, allowing researchers to uncover patterns and build initial conceptual frameworks (Swedberg, 2020). While the findings are not intended for statistical generalisation, they offer valuable insights that can inform practice and guide future research in similar educational settings. The selected school was purposefully chosen due to its representativeness of key features found across many private language institutions in Thailand, including its operational model, student demographics, and teaching practices. Therefore, while it is true that the study focuses on a single private language school, we contend that this does not inherently weaken its contribution to understanding broader trends in the private education sector in Thailand. This section describes the methodology, providing details about the context and samples, and data collection and analysis.

Context and participants

This research was conducted at a private English language school in Thailand with eight campuses across the country. Operating for 23 years, the school currently serves nearly 4000 students from primary to tertiary levels. It is divided into two departments: Reading and Writing (RW), taught by Thai teachers, and Listening and Speaking (LS), taught by both foreign and Thai teachers. The LS department also includes materials designers who create in-house lesson plans and materials, as the

school does not use commercial textbooks.

The 54 participants in this study were 1) teachers from the RW and LS departments, 2) materials designers, 3) administrative staff, and 4) principals from each campus. Different contexts have varying degrees of difficulty adopting GELT principles. For example, in The School, where operations are divided into departments, applying GELT in LS may be more manageable and appropriate as it aligns with the core listening and speaking functions of ELF (Jenkins, 2007; Kimura & Canagarajah, 2017; Miao et al., 2025; Vettorel, 2018; Walkinshaw & Kirkpatrick, 2022). RW, on the other hand, is considered more challenging (de Figueiredo, 2021; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2010), however, we still posit that GELT appropriately fits this context.

Purposefully drawing samples from different departments and roles within one school could provide richer reflections and broader perspectives (Patton, 2002). Apart from the teachers and materials designers, we included the administrative staff as participants in the current study. Although their roles are not directly related to teaching, they serve as key intermediaries between the school and parents. In this context, they are often involved in conveying school policies, addressing parents' concerns, and facilitating communication related to the educational program. Their inclusion provides insight into how the initiative is perceived and supported across different layers of the school community, particularly in terms of parental engagement and institutional communication. We also included The School's principals, who oversee the operation of each centre. As they are responsible for key administrative decisions, including teacher management and hiring, their perspectives help illuminate how the initiative aligns with broader institutional priorities.

All participants were approved by The School to participate in the Global Englishes-oriented workshop organised by the authors (detailed below). Consent was also obtained from participants before collecting and analysing their reflections.

Data collection and analysis

The Global Englishes-oriented workshop was arranged by the author with a guest from Griffith University, Australia, who is an expert in the field. The 8-hour workshop was divided into three blocks of teaching (see Table 2 below). Table 2 provides a direct mapping of the workshop topics and activities to each of the GELT framework dimensions.

Table 2.

Workshop Content

Topics	Contents	Dimensions of GELT framework	Activity
1. English(es) and globalisation (2 Hours)	- Understanding the impact of globalisation - Language and power: the case of English	D12: Ideology & D9: Needs	Small group discussion on perceptions of different Englishes, language change, and learning preferences.

Topics	Contents	Dimensions of GELT framework	Activity
	- The rise of mixed forms and new varieties of English		Listening activity (video of expert lecture) and associated worksheet for taking notes.
	- Debunking the myths of traditional ELT (Phillipson, 1992) (e.g. 'the native speaker fallacy', 'the early start fallacy', 'the maximum exposure fallacy'). - Approaches to ELT in the age of globalisation	D11: Goals of learning	Small group discussion of questions related to traditional ELT instruction – a) Native speakers are the best teachers b) The earlier you start learning English, the better you learn c) Only English should be used in classrooms – no other languages. After reviewing content related to traditional terms and implications for ELT, students are asked to reflect on learner aims.
2. English as a lingua franca (ELF) and local Englishes	- Defining ELF - Linguistic characteristics of ELF - Intelligibility over accuracy	D4: Norms & D10: Assessment criterion	Students complete a matching activity (Instructions: What are some grammatical characteristics of ELF? Look at your handout. Match the examples in the left column with the descriptions of ELF grammar in the right column). After completing the activity, they discuss notions of grammaticality and correctness and the impact on communication.
	- Reconceptualising ownership of English in Asia and ASEAN - Status of English in Asia	D2: Ownership & D13: Orientation	Students voice opinions on statements about English teacher expectations in an Asian context.
	- Internationalisation and localisation of English - Characteristics of Thai English		Students are asked to reflect on and record the content that resonated with them the most during the session.
3. Material development.	- Challenges in implementing GELT - Incorporating Global Englishes in developing	D7: Source of materials	Students discuss how to incorporate GELT components into lesson planning and their perceptions towards the concept were surveyed. These three

Topics	Contents	Dimensions of GELT framework	Activity
	teaching materials (Suejam & Walkinshaw, 2025)		questions were used as the main source for data collection on the Padlet wall.

While the workshop was not originally developed as a principle-by-principle sequence, many activities were designed to address multiple dimensions of the GELT framework simultaneously. For instance, discussions on Thai English simultaneously engaged with concepts of ownership, norms, and role models. This integrated approach reflects the complex and interconnected nature of GELT principles in practice.

The content of the interactive workshop was designed based on several key components of the GELT framework. It included group discussions, individual reflections, and review exercises following each topic. The first part discussed the role of English and globalisation and how it impacts the ELT landscape (D9: answering to students' need to use English globally), and the value in embracing diversity of English used today (D11: inclusive paradigm). The workshop also used Phillipson's (1992) fallacies to question and reprioritise the goal of language learning (D11: becoming multicompetent users rather than attaining native-like proficiency).

Then, the workshop explored approaches to learning English as a lingua franca by introducing the linguistic features of various Englishes and highlighting how learners can benefit from exposure to diverse English varieties and accents. This shifts the pedagogical focus from accuracy as a standard benchmark toward mutual intelligibility (D4: fluid norms; D10: communicative competence as an assessment criterion). Furthermore, the workshop encouraged participants to reconsider the concept of English language ownership by examining the localisation of English, specifically within students' immediate context of ASEAN and Thailand, and how English is part of their language repertoire along with other languages (D2: fluid ownership of English; D13: translingual practices in language teaching).

Lastly, teachers were presented with preliminary findings from Suejam and Walkinshaw's (2025) study on issues relating to GELT-based materials development, and what languages or accents should be presented to learners, or included as role models or source material (D8: multilingual resources). After the workshop, participants wrote either an individual or paired anonymous reflection on a Padlet wall based on their paired discussion task. Their contributions were guided by these open-ended questions, allowing for the analysis to be adapted to emerging content (Dornyei, 2007):

1. How relevant do you think GELT is in your school context?
2. To what extent do you agree with GELT, and which construct (s) do you see that fit in with your school context?
3. What are the possible opportunities and challenges in implementing GELT in your school context?

Twenty-seven reflections were qualitatively coded and analysed, using thematic analysis (TA)

after an intensive GELT workshop through NVivo software to identify patterns, and then categorised into salient themes related to the two RQs – first, the attitudes of the participants towards the conceptualisation of GELT, and second, the perceived opportunities and challenges of implementing GELT. TA allows for qualitative exploration of emerging patterns in the reflections to identify key themes aligning with the topics being investigated (overall attitudes; opportunities and challenges of GELT) (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Dornyei, 2007).

To ensure reliability, intercoder agreement was a key analytic component. The first author conducted the coding alongside two independent external coders. Upon completion, all three coders meticulously reviewed and cross-checked the data. This collaborative process continued until there was unanimous agreement, ensuring consistency and accuracy in the process. Data that did not receive unanimous agreement were removed. Furthermore, one limitation identified in the above procedure is that participants' attitudes toward GELT were assessed immediately after an instructional session delivered by the researchers, who may have been perceived as experts or authority figures. This dynamic raises the possibility that participants might respond in ways they believe are expected or favorable, rather than expressing their authentic views. While efforts were made to create an open and nonjudgmental environment, this potential influence should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings

Findings and discussion

RQ 1 – What are the participants' overall attitudes towards GELT?

In examining how stakeholders within The School perceive the GELT framework, written reflections (n = 27) were analysed based on their overall attitudes towards the conceptualisation of GELT. 59.26 per cent (n = 16) of results were positive, and 47.74 per cent (n =11) showed mixed perceptions (see Figure 1 below).

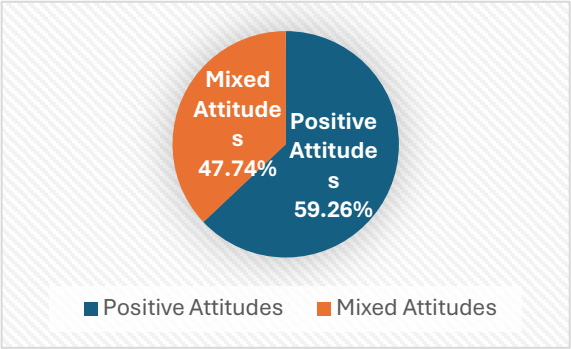


Figure 1. *Participants' overall attitudes towards the conceptualisation of GELT*

Positive attitudes towards GELT

Most participants had accepting views towards GELT, exemplified in the following extracts, labelled by the assigned participant number: *"... GELT is useful and relevant for my language*

teaching … adding other cultures in the lessons helps inspire the learners…or open their worlds" (#16). This suggests openness to the idea of GELT and recognised benefits to students in their specific context. Additionally, this participant emphasised achievable learning goals rather than imagined benchmarks of NS norms. Two other participants mentioned this: *"…learners may see more attainable outcomes of English language learning under this framework"* (#18) and *"It's a [sic]kind of result[s]-oriented for learners"* (#15). Evaluation of the results suggests participants view language learning under GELT as a holistic approach that enhances language proficiency.

Mixed attitudes towards GELT

Although not all participants showed positive attitudes towards GELT, mixed reflections did not imply rejection of the idea. Instead, they indicate acceptance, but with a degree of doubt and concern. Galloway and Numajiri (2020) reported similar findings from pre- and in-service TESOL practitioners, showing that while NS norms remain influential, there are also favourable attitudes towards GELT. These notions were reflected in the following statements: "*GELT is great for students to communicate [in] English in their country. Anyway, for [sic] a teacher who teaches English should have a model or standard in teaching English in Thailand. For me I like [the] GELT model"* (#8), and *"Personally, I find the GELT paradigm fascinating, yet there are still research areas that should be explored and questions I would like to ask"* (#21). These excerpts imply a positive, yet hesitant, attitude towards GELT. Complications are also shown in Montakantiwong's (2023) study of teachers' considerations around determining factors for implementing GELT in classrooms. Two viewpoints emerged: first, some teachers believed awareness raising is a responsibility of teachers, while others mentioned it depends on students' needs. Aligning with the findings from the present study, although teachers are open research onto the idea, they must consider, primarily, meeting students' expectations, since schools rely on those students' fees.

Student expectations in private language institutions include supplementing their formal school education, improving their test scores, and preparing for university entrance exams (Saengboon, 2019; Wongsothorn et al., 2002). Given this context, therefore, implementing GELT in its ideal form can be a real hindrance. Teachers are under institutional and parental pressure to prioritise test-oriented outcomes, which typically align with traditional, accuracy-focused models of English. As such, although teachers may be open to GELT at the ideological level, in practice they are constrained by structural and economic realities that make full implementation difficult and less plausible. This may thus result in the participants' expression of hesitation and ambivalence towards the GELT principles. However, with the separation of LS and RW, LS has greater potential to be aligned with GELT in the sense that it aims to improve the communicative aspect of the language. It therefore provides an opportunity to combine both GELT and traditional ELT. The RW can rightfully serve the parents' or students' expectations regarding traditional expectations and outcomes. Having scope to incorporate global perspectives in the LS, as shown in our study, highlights the effective coexistence of GELT and traditional ELT.

Turning to the second research question, we analysed the participants' reflections from both

positive and mixed attitudes to identify the emerging key themes.

RQ 2 – What are the perceived opportunities and challenges of the implementation of GELT?

The critical themes emerging from the reflections on the perceived opportunities and challenges regarding the implementation of GELT are presented here. Regarding opportunities, (1) authentic use of English in a global context, (2) heightened level of confidence, and (3) pedagogical advantage were identified (Table 3) and are discussed below:

Table 3.

Emerging Key Themes of GELT Opportunities

Themes	Occurrences
Authentic use of English in a global context	14
Pedagogical advantage	10
Heightened level of confidence	6
Priority of standard language accuracy	6
Language assessment	3

Opportunities to implement GELT in The School's curriculum

Authentic use of English in a Global Context. Using English in a real-world context is the dominating theme of participants' reported perceived opportunities. One reflection stated that "*GELT will lead the teachers to guide or explain to the students how to use English to communicate in society"* (#2) and another that *"Knowledge and understanding of Global Englishes and cultural differences will be useful for [students]…to communicate to people from all around the world"* (#7). These views reiterate the ELF notion that interactions in English among people from different linguacultures greatly enhance intercultural communication (Baker, 2015). Consequently, students should be exposed to Englishes and cultures outside the anglosphere by incorporating GELT in language classrooms (Galloway & Rose, 2013, 2017; Rose & Galloway, 2019) in order to provide the accurate understanding required to function and use English in authentic contexts.

Besides exposing students to Englishes in ELT and acknowledging English use in the global community, GELT helps students and teachers value their social and cultural identity, a concept exemplified in these participants' statements: *"As an English teacher who is Thai, I can never be defined as a native speaker. However, that does not mean I cannot teach English effectively"* (#5), and GELT can provide *"hiring opportunities to people who are not a native speaker but expert in English*" (#9). These statements suggest that if The School adopts GELT to guide their teaching practice, they can reposition themselves from feeling inferior to NESTs, to believing they are competent and capable teachers. One implication of GELT principles correlates with what Phillipson (1992) calls the "native-speaker fallacy" (p. 185), signifying that the birthright status of nativeness does not equate to 'better' or 'superior' language teachers. Nevertheless, research clearly shows that teachers who have

pedagogical knowledge and competency in the target language make 'good' language teachers (Floris & Renandya, 2020; Renandya & Jacobs, 2023; Shishavan & Sadeghi, 2009), not their birth status of NES or NNES. In fact, teachers who bring rich linguistic and personal histories into the classroom, and who are portrayed as language experts using English in lingua franca situations, are what GELT calls for (De Costa & Norton, 2017; Rose & Galloway, 2019). In a sense, it reclaims the ownership of the English language, so that rather than belonging to NESs, "members of the global community" (Shibata, 2011, p. 77) are also valid users of English, and can thus be considered competent language teachers, in line with participant #18's observation that *"[l]earners will have more chances to study from competent teachers. They don't have to wait for only native speakers to teach them".*

Pedagogical advantage. Another key theme that emerged is the pedagogical advantage of GELT. Participants considered GELT a valuable framework that can be harnessed for effective language teaching and learning. This was evident in reflections such as *"It may sometimes help students if we use a little of their native languages to teach them English."* (#25), and *"...we've limited time for learning… if students don't understand what teachers try to explain. The more they explain, the more confused they are. [The] [t]eacher can explain it in a Thai word"* (#20). These reflections highlight the pedagogical advantage of using students' first language to enhance their acquisition of English, contradicting traditional ELT that regards students' own language as a hindrance to learning. This notion is supported by the principle of translanguaging (an ideology that aligns with GELT) that advocates the use of students' entire linguistic repertoire of their known languages (in this case, Thai) as a language acquisition tool (Kampittayakul, 2019; Wei, 2018; Yasar & Dikilitas, 2022). Guided by GELT, the participants here believe that occasional use of their first language can accelerate the learning and teaching process, demonstrating a pedagogical advantage of GELT. Moreover, building on the concept of translanguaging, by incorporating other languages into the ELT classroom, student engagement and involvement in the learning process is enhanced, allowing for better learning outcome. This is reflected in participant comments here: "*…learners may also see more attainable goals of English language learning under this framework*" (#18), and "*[s]tudents would have less pressure and the level of comprehension would be higher which in turn, results in higher level of engagement*" (#19). This supports research by #Anonymised (2025) in which students' engagement in learning English with pedagogic tools inspired by multilingualism was investigated. Their findings revealed that in addition to increasing language proficiency, students become more engaged and active in the classroom.

Heightened level of confidence. Another benefit of GELT is that exposure to other Englishes and cultures helps students recognise the diverse ways people worldwide use English. As Participant #15 noted, *"GELT could help teachers encourage students to use more English with more confidence because it welcomes all kinds of cultures"*. Thus, unconsciously confining themselves to NS norms and models is unnecessary as long as they can use English to serve their purposes (communicating in an ELF setting). Canagarajah (2013) argues that there is a need to redefine English proficiency, placing greater importance on "language awareness rather than grammatical correctness…strategies of negotiation rather than mastery of product-orientated rules; pragmatics rather than competence" (p.

8). This pedagogical implication from GELT was noted by Participant #20, who said that *"[t]he most important thing is to be confident in speaking out and to think about sth [sic] for sharing*". By having a GELT oriented mindset, students are encouraged to use the language without fear of making mistakes *"...as it [GELT] helps people dare to speak without [being] worried. Moreover, the speakers won't be frightened to make mistakes while speaking" (#10).* Consequently, GELT can increase students' confidence, prepare them for international communication, and protect their self-esteem (Cai & Fang, 2022; Lu & Buripakdi, 2020; Panyang & Phusawisot, 2023).

Challenges to implementing GELT in the School's curriculum

In addition to these perceived opportunities, the following challenges of GELT are discussed below: (1) priority for standard language accuracy and (2) language assessment.

Priority for standard language accuracy. One challenge in implementing GELT into the school curriculum is standard language accuracy ideology which refers to how language is viewed as either correct or incorrect (Seargeant, 2009). This challenge has been prioritised as it constitutes the foundation of language schools (Sifakis, 2008), especially those funded by parental financial support like The School in this study. This prioritisation allows expectations and achievements to be measured against established NS norms (McNamara, 2012). These sentiments were shown in such participant statements as*, "...we have to stick to Traditional ELT so that the students can learn the correct English first"* (#7), "*...a teacher who teaches English should have a model or standard in teaching English in Thailand*" (#8), or when participants emphasised concepts as in *"...the standard of English such as grammatical [sic], phonology, syntax, etc"* (#14).

One possible reason for this focus on accuracy stems from ingrained monolithic views of English and an absence of GELT exposure in teacher education programs (Dewey, 2015; Karakaş, 2021; Shin & Walkinshaw, 2023). Thus, many teachers exhibit ambivalence towards change. Instead, they practise what they were trained to do and continue to deem that best practise (Xu, 2012), as "custodians of the English language and culture" (Sifakis, 2008, p. 235). Thus, a change in teachers' beliefs about language ideologies is needed to make a conceptual transition from traditional ELT to GELT (Cameron & Galloway, 2019; Funada, 2021; Prabjandee, 2020). This is especially the case at The School where lesson plans and teaching materials are created in-house, with teachers acting as gatekeepers who determine the content of teaching materials. Guided by such prioritisations of standard language accuracy that cater to students' and parents' expectations, teachers and material designers could be pressured to make decisions in favour of the traditional ELT paradigm.

Language assessment. Intricately linked to standard language accuracy is language assessment. This is regarded as an integral part of language education as it helps teachers determine students' learning performance, even in the context of ELF (Chopin, 2015). Concerns about this are unsurprising (see also Cameron & Galloway, 2019), because the perspectives on evaluation criteria used to assess language outcomes are essential to driving a paradigm shift in ELT. Tests and testing processes play a pivotal role in shaping learning and teaching practices and Thailand has a test-centric educational

culture. If assessment practices remain unchanged, washback effects will persist, making it difficult to achieve curriculum innovation (Selvi et al., 2024) such as what GELT promotes. Participant #4 voiced their concern around language assessment when stating that *"GELT is very useful, but nowadays, the education system in Thailand still focuses on Standard English, like many Thais study English for the test"*; similarly, Participant #6 said,*"[w]e can't deny that standard English still plays a crucial role in society for the test and stuff"*. These responses highlight this culture, which has long defined Thai education and led to negative washback on student learning (Todd, 2019; Todd & Shih, 2014). Students' language learning goals are commonly focused on test scores, rather than practical proficiency. As a result, despite agreeing with GELT's value to varying degrees, they cannot overlook the societal factor of testing and assessment.

Conclusion

There are some limitations that should be recognised in this study, and the findings should be interpreted with caution. First, conclusions drawn from only one private language school in Thailand, may not be generalisable for the overall private language school sector. Second, despite including different groups of stakeholders within the same context, participants provided responses anonymously. Therefore, we cannot identify how each section in The School views GELT specifically. Regardless, the participants' reflections provide evidence that GELT has made inroads into beliefs about good practice in language teaching. The majority had positive and welcoming attitudes towards its conceptualisation and expressed the potential in applying it in light of authentic language use in a globalised world, the heightened level of confidence, and the pedagogical advantages of GELT. Nonetheless, there are tensions between beliefs and practicality. Despite GELT being viewed as positive and valuable, language assessment and standard language accuracy remain inhibiting factors, creating hardship in the conceptual transition away from traditional ELT. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the adoption of the GELT framework does not mean a complete rejection of traditional ELT approaches (Rose & Galloway, 2019). Rather, the two can coexist, complementing one another, serving a specific educational context and learning objectives. This is particularly relevant in the context of The School in the present study, where the operation is divided into two main areas: (1) teaching reading and writing, which remains closely aligned with test preparation and accuracy-focused instruction, and (2) teaching listening and speaking, which provides greater flexibility for incorporating GELT-informed practices. This division allows for a more nuanced integration of GELT principles, without compromising students' academic goals tied to traditional English language assessments.

This paper concludes with recommendations for private language schools in Thailand, drawn from insights from the current research findings. Two key barriers to implementing GELT principles in these contexts are the emphasis on language assessment and a strict adherence to standard language norms, both of which reflect the top-down pedagogical traditions in Thai education. To initiate meaningful change, it is crucial to encourage ground-level, classroom-based innovations (Galloway &

Numajiri, 2020; Suejam et al., 2025; Suejam & Walkinshaw, 2025). One important step is for language teachers and practitioners to instigate awareness of the diversity of Englishes and the cultural dimensions of language use within their classrooms to promote a bottom-up approach to pedagogical change that is both context-sensitive and sustainable. This awareness can help students prepare for future English use in lingua franca communication contexts, hence developing both students' linguistic and communicative competencies.

Moreover, private language schools should invest in ongoing professional development for their in-service teachers to help them navigate the principles in practice (Cai & Fang, 2022; Intachai et al., 2025; Selvi, 2017; Vettorel, 2021). If in-service teachers remain disengaged and only implement practices from their previous teacher education programs, they would likely be less open to adopting new ideas. As illustrated in the reflection from Participant #7, despite the GELT paradigm's perceived usefulness, they would feel more comfortable to "Stick to traditional ELT". Providing in-service teachers with ongoing professional development and engaging them in the process of developing and adopting GELT in their local classroom context may help alleviate tensions among classroom practitioners and clarify their hesitation towards implementing GELT.

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